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Joseph Addison's *Cato* and John Home's *Douglas* remain to this day two of the most popular yet often overlooked works of tragedy during a century when comedy—with the prominence of playwrights like Congreve, Farquhar, Goldsmith, and Sheridan—dominated English theaters. In referring to *Douglas* (1756), Ernest Campbell Mossner proclaims: "Its nearest rival in popularity, indeed, was Addison's *Cato*, as far back as 1713".[1] The connection between the two plays seems a natural one, especially considering the heroic virtues that both authors locate in their respective heroes. And as literature can do perhaps more saliently than any other art form, the popularity of these tragedies relates a great deal to us about the cultural milieu in which they first appeared.

Cato and *Douglas* share an importance, not only in the popularity they garnered and the controversy surrounding their stage debuts, but in the fact that the hero of both plays achieves an apotheosis. Addison himself had pointed out in *Spectator* No. 39 (1711): "A virtuous man (says Seneca) struggling with misfortunes is such a spectacle as the gods might look upon with pleasure."[2] And the spirit in which humans struggle with misfortunes, as well as the magnitude of this struggle, or *agon*, determines whether or not a person achieves heroic status. Perhaps the most telling characteristic that we see in the figures of Cato and Douglas is their unwavering, if unrealistic, virtue, because this aspect of their characters leads them both to certain death but also to a subsequent exalted status.

Joseph Campbell, the comparative mythologist who ironically enjoyed a cult following akin to an apotheosis after his death in 1987, has identified a template for the hero's coming into being as such. These so-called rites of passage Campbell refers to as "the nuclear unit of the monomyth," whereby, "a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his

fellow man."[3] Like Yeats's gyres (and most likely a revisionary descendant of Yeats's mythical method), Campbell's template for the quest motif diagramatically forms a circular pattern. And both Cato and Douglas achieve an apotheosis because they fulfill the cycle of the monomyth, or the formula for heroism in Western mythology.

Superficial observation of these two plays would note that neither Cato nor Douglas returns victorious from the fields of battle (Cato, in fact, does not even participate in battle.), as well as that both figures die before the final curtain falls on either play; in other words, neither man returns to "bestow boons on his fellow man"—literally, that is; Campbell reiterated throughout his lectures and public television series on myths that literal interpretation of the monomyth—and myths, too—undermines the metaphorical impulse of literature. As allegories, the deaths of Cato and Douglas initiate the deification of those hopes and ideals for which they died. Every hero thus represents a symbolic "return" of the previous hero, the embodiment of the same lofty ideals retailored to fit the specific era (a system analogous to Harold Bloom's theory of precursor poets). But the hero of tragedy must become the sacrificial lamb, just as the etymology of the word tragedy (the Greek tragoidia, or 'goat[lamb] song') suggests. Campbell asserts the importance attached to the death of the hero: "the hero of yesterday becomes the tyrant of tomorrow unless he crucifies himself today" (p. 353). This theory can be validated by the literature of Western civilization, except possibly in modernity, where popular heroes are able to recreate the "self" rather than crucify themselves, a post-Freudian wrinkle on Oedipus' self-blinding.

The swift fates of Cato and Douglas in these plays reflect some important analogies to figures like Christ and Oedipus: that life's temporal condition rushes onward, and that we often face circumstances neither of our making or choosing. Yet in order to maintain the dignity of a culture, heroes commit to community ideals rather than their own self-importance. Though this concept might sound too altruistic, and anachronistic in our age of Hollywood, MTV, and sports stars, we witness Cato and Douglas seizing their opportunities for immortality in a converse manner: self-sacrifice. And because of Cato's and Douglas's prominence in their respective societies, their deeds lead to their valorization.

Because Cato and Douglas are victims of circumstances not of their own making, herein lies the Christ-like typology that allows for their apotheoses. Cato takes on insurmountable odds in challenging Caesar's army over the issue of free rule, and Douglas patriotically heeds a call

to arms, unaware of the political treachery one might encounter on account of noble lineage. Their virtuous actions foil others' flaws, and their devotion to their ideals and unflinching acceptance of fate, however unrealistic and saccharine each case may seem, are still admirable qualities. Furthermore, our empathic response to the contextualities of Cato's and Douglas's dilemmas, though allegorical, inspires us to their level of commitment to solidarity and personal integrity.

Douglas says to his mother, Lady Randolph, just before he slays the villainous Glenalvon in self-defense: "If in this strife I fall, blame not your son,/ Who, if he lives not honored, must not live" (V: 170-71). Douglas makes this charge only moments after the pair had been made aware of their familial relationship. Likewise, the historical figure Cato, was greatly revered in his own age, and in the generations that followed Cato's life, Roman men of letters extol his heroism: Sallust in his histories, Plutarch in his *Lives*, Lucan in his poetry, and Seneca in his his philosophical treatises, all show an admiration for his heroic virtues and strength of character. Cato's virtues embody those of the Republic, which differed ideologically with the Empire that followed. Even Cicero, who as an elder statesman at the time of Cato's death and one who rarely commented favorably on Cato, claimed that he manifested:

> what strength there is in character, in integrity, in greatness of soul, and in that which remains unshaken by violent storms; which shines in darkness; which though dislodged from its home; is radiant always by its own light and never sullied by the baseness of others.[4]

These plaudits illustrate Cato's magnificence in the classical world, as governor of Utica within the Roman Republic. But more important, this deference reveals that Cato appeals to a set of laws beyond those of a Rome headed towards Empire; his laws are those of freedom, integrity, and human dignity.

In Act I, Cato's sons, Portius and Marcus, sound a paean on their father's Roman virtues, as does the Numidian prince, Juba, who happens to be secretly in love with Cato's daughter, Marcia. This opening scene, which sets the tone for the whole play, informs us that Cato is an embattled governor who stands upon principle in the face of insurmountable odds. Portius comments: "His sufferings shine, and spread a glory round him;/ Greatly unfortunate, he fights the cause/ Of honor, virtue, liberty, and Rome" (I,i, 30-32). Yet some critics see Cato as quite unrealistic in his ideals: Bonamy Dobrée calls him an

"intolerable prig" and recalls John Dennis's remarks that he sacrifices his son, liberty, and his country as well, all for stoical pride.[5] Perhaps Cato is uncompromising to extremes, which almost always means metaphoric death to a politician. But Cato's failings as a politician stem from his convictions that run counter to tyranny. And like Douglas, if he cannot live with honor, then he will not live: "Justice gives way to force: the conquered world/ Is Caesar's: Cato has no business in it" (IV, iv, ll. 23-24). Cato's stoic death reflects the play's allegorical judgment against imperialism, for Rome's exploitative measures in empire building becomes a suitable analogy for eighteenth-century Europe, which would experience a major revolution both in the New World and the Old.

Despite the manifold similarities between the Augustan Age in England and Rome during the time of Cato and Julius Caesar, the attitudes towards suicide in the eighteenth-century had evolved into the kind of taboos that still seek to outlaw euthanasia, or the value system which supports the notion of life with dignity or no life at all. For the Roman, however, there was a sense of honor—though one can hardly help thinking of Falstaff's soliloquy, in *Henry IV, pt. I*, on the emptiness of honor in death as an alternative view—in dying by the sword, whether one's own, or not. Furthermore, Cato's own peculiar situation is, like all suicides, both a complicated and complex issue. He knows that his death will exculpate his family and his senators. Furthermore, Cato recognizes the fate of defeated generals (like Vercingetorix, the Celtic leader who in 52 B.C. was paraded through Rome in a cage) and decides against a similar fate: "Would Lucius[his son] have me live to swell the number/ Of Caesar's slaves, or by a base submission/ Give up the cause of Rome, and own a tyrant" (29-31). Cato understands that in dying a Roman's death he dies with dignity in the *cause célèbre* of "virtue, liberty, and Rome," which M. M. Kelsall calls the key words of the play (155). Thus Cato becomes a martyr and a model, the *beau ideal* for republican virtues. Addison even makes Cato into a Horatian theorist, preferring the Republic over the Empire and a pastoral existence to urban life, which he advises his son Lucius to take:

> Let me advise thee to retreat betimes
> To thy paternal seat, the Sabine field,
> Where the great Censor toiled with his own hands,
> And all our frugal ancestors were blest
> In humble virtues and a rural life.
> There live retired, pray for the peace of Rome:

> Content thyself to be obscurely good.
> When vice prevails, and impious men bear sway,
> The post of honour is a private station. (IV, iv)

It is appropriate that just before his suicide, Cato meditates on Plato's ideas of the immortality of the soul (in *The Phaedo*): " 'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;/ 'Tis heav'n itself, that points out an hereafter,/ And intimates an eternity to man./ Eternity! thou pleasing dreadful thought!" (ll. 7-10). In this scene Cato apprehends the divine vision of what he will become once he eliminates his corporeal existence: immortal:

> Thus I am doubly armed; My death and life,
> My bane and antidote, are both before me:
> This [sword] in a moment brings me to an end;
> But this informs me I shall never die.
> The soul, secured in her existence, smiles
> At the drawn dagger, and defies the point.
> The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
> Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years;
> But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,
> Unhurt amidst the wars of elements,
> The wrecks of matter, and the crush of worlds.
> (V, i, 21-31)

In this rather sublime conjecture Cato transcends the constraints of physical existence in a temporal world, a world of opportunists like Sempronius and traitors like Syphax, which, he recognizes, "was made for Caesar" (V, i, 19). Campbell explains the self-annihilation of the hero as a visionary experience in such a way that brings to mind Bishop Berkeley's—a contemporary of Addison's—ideas on the spiritual reality of the universe. "The basic problem," Campbell says, "is to enlarge the pupil of the eye, so that the 'body' with its attendant personality will no longer obstruct the view" (189). Such is the case with Cato, whose vision of immortality becomes inextricably linked with his commitment to the ideals of community and republican virtues.

Cato's subsequent suicide confirms both his selflessness and his vision of immortality, and it brings his apotheosis to fruition. What we had witnessed of Cato's noble ideals in Act I ascends to the mythic state of heroism, as his son Lucius eloquently and stoically laments Cato's death:

There fled the greatest soul that ever warmed
A Roman breast. O Cato! O my friend!
Thy will shall be religiously observed.
But let us bear this awful corpse to Caesar,
And lay it in his sight, that it may stand
A fence betwixt us and the victor's wrath;
Cato, though dead, shall still protect his friends.
(V, iv, 100-106)

This scene evokes a pathos reminiscent of Priam's after the death and disfigurement of his son, Hector, at the hands and wrath of Achilles. For as in *The Iliad*, the dead corpse is used as an instrument of appeal to the victor's sympathies.

Any viewer or reader of *Cato* can identify with the psychological struggle Cato undergoes at the opening of the play over whether or not to join Caesar's growing regime. But these expedient measures would mean submission to tyranny. As Cato says in Act IV, after his dead son Marcus has been placed in front of his grieving court: "Alas! my friends!/ Why mourn you thus? let not a private loss/ Afflict your hearts. "Tis Rome requires our tears" (iv, 88-90). Prig though he may be, this creed exhibits a resolute determination to rebel against despots. And it is not surprising that *Cato* was President Washington's favorite play—he requested its performance during the winter of 1777-78 at Valley Forge to inspire his troops. For this reason Robert Halsband calls *Cato* "the most important drama of the eighteenth century".[6] Cato represents not only the consummate patriot, but he also embodies the philosopher-king of Plato's *Republic*: he will not become the pragmatist and compromise the ideals for which his son has died.

Furthermore, there is an overriding allegory within the historical context of 1713 (the year in which the play made its debut) concerning England's involvement in the War of the Spanish Succession. With Queen Anne, old and infirm, and having no legitimate successor, Whigs saw the Duke of Marlborough—a proponent for continuing the war—in light of Cato and his stand on liberty. The Tories, however, saw the dictatorial Caesar as an allegorical representation of Marlborough (Stone 474). Perhaps this controversy merely reminds us of of the ambiguous nature of political allegory, despite which Cato remains an *exemplum* for political leaders to follow as he stands for ideals that each member of the community should hold sacred: liberty and loyalty.

As with *Cato*, we find in *Douglas* inspiration for a commitment to ideals that stand above deceit and corruption. In Home's play, the death of the heroic Young Norval (and heir to the Douglas estate) perpetuates

the mythic cycle and signals an apotheosis for the fallen warrior. Although the circumstances with Douglas's quest motif differ from those of Cato, the cycle of the monomyth remains complete nonetheless. As with Cato, Douglas ascends to heroic stature because he symbolically completes the hero's rites of passage: separation from the world, penetration of some source of power, and life enhancing return.

When Douglas arrives upon the scene as Young Norval in Act I, we soon become aware that Lady Randolph is indeed his biological mother and that his father was the heroic warrior, Douglas, who died in battle before his son was born. After meeting Young Norval, Lady Randolph comments to Anna, her confidante: "I thought, that had the son of Douglas lived,/ He might have been like this young gallant stranger" (II,i, 164-165). The rather fantastic history underlying the events of the play is a pastiche of several and readily identifiable myths, such as the stories of Oedipus and Moses.

Perhaps the genius of Home's play remains that *Douglas* abounds in mythical archetypes. Fearing for the life of the Douglas infant, Anna had placed him in a sylvan stream; that the hero's life is threatened in infancy is, of course, a common strain in Western mythology, a motif which sets up the mother-son reunion between Lady Randolph and Young Norval as one of epic fatalism. In the meantime, Lady Randolph had assumed that her infant died during labor. But in Act III Lady Randolph meets Old Norval, a prisoner who has in his possession the Douglas crest, and he tells her of his rescuing an infant boy from a stream and that he now flourishes in "youth, health, and beauty" (III, i, 118). Thus, Douglas's "separation from the world" has been since the time of his birth, and his idealized pastoral education from Old Norval represents his penetration into the source of power, like a John the Baptist or Merlin figure, as Joseph Campbell would say. These circumstances set up Douglas's return as one of mythic proportion. When Douglas recognizes his identity at the end of the play, the event brings to mind the similar discovery of Telemachus in *The Odyssey* because their quests are ostensibly about identity.

The complications affecting this reunion serve to drive the play forward. In Act IV Lady Randolph reveals to Young Norval that she is his mother, that Lord Randolph is the younger brother of his fallen father and her first husband, Douglas, and that he (Young Norval) is the rightful heir to the estate that Lord Randolph will not relinquish. This disclosure completes Young Norval's identity quest and initiates a new dilemma with outright analogies to Hamlet's. (Based on an old

Scottish ballad, *Douglas* was one of the plays that helped initiate the Shakespeare revival.) But Home's play also recalls *Macbeth* in more than its setting and aristocratic feuds. The emotionally fraught Lady Randolph remains the central figure of the play and calls to mind Lady Macbeth, except she lacks any manifestation of an evil streak. Nevertheless, Lady Randolph, upon hearing the news of her newly discovered son's death commits suicide by drowning; the violent passion of Lady Macbeth is evident, but this occurrence harkens back to *Hamlet* and Ophelia's act of reprisal against the misogyny of her world. (This reader finds it a rather pedestrian and perhaps cluttered handling of Shakespearean elements, particularly because of its heavy-handed Christian righteousness and streaks of maudlin sentimentalism.) Nonetheless, the scenes between Lady Randolph and Young Norval are, as Calhoun Winton has stated, "the high points of the drama."[7] The discovery that they are mother and son has an even deeper meaning in its mythic suggestiveness, which Campbell articulates:

> The mystical marriage with the queen goddess of the world represents the hero's total mastery of life; for the woman is life, and the hero is its knower and master. And the testings of the hero, which were preliminary to his ultimate experience and deed, were symbolical of those crises of realization by means of which his consciousness came to be amplified and made capable of enduring the full possession of the mother-destroyer, his inevitable bride. With that he knows that he and his father are one; he is in the father's place. (120-121)

The union of Lady Randolph and her son clearly symbolizes this mystical marriage, the life-perpetuating image of madonna-and-child. Likewise, Douglas's death in her arms (in Act V) might be seen in these same iconographical terms as symbolic of the *pietà*. Home, pastor at the Presbyterian church in Ahtelstanford until this play—and the pastime of playwriting—proved too controversial for the clergyman to endure, has combined archetypal patterns with the haunting landscape and medieval lore of the Scottish Border in a way that anticipates the romances of Scott. Add to these characteristics the gothic element (Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, often considered as the first gothic novel, was published in the same year as *Douglas*), and Home's play, whatever its shortcomings when compared to Shakespeare's tragedies, remains a very respectable drama—an enterprise which the Romantics found next to impossible.

Audiences and readers of Home's play, as with *Cato*, are finally confronted with the ultimate transitoriness of life, as well as suicidal acts on the part of the central figures. Like the figure of Cato, Young Norval, the titular hero of *Douglas* (as he is referred to in the final two acts of the text), must die for ideals to attain a Christ-like apotheosis. Affecting though both are, they lack full development as characters, and neither has any trace of a flaw, much less one as tragic as hubris; in fact, Addison's Cato comes close to self-parody at moments. But until recently, we in Western civilization wanted our heroes to have no blemishes.

Cato and Douglas do, however, become beacons for liberty, honor, and courage, and foes to tyranny during a century in which the ideals of democracy made great advances; for this reason alone, the heroism which both Cato and Douglas exude has immense relevance. Yet peculiar to the mode of apotheosis, these two plays are tragedies because virtuous and idealistic figures are portrayed as victims of a corrupt world, and their deaths represent the metaphorical rebirth of the standards for which they died—a standard which the living can only deify unless one is willing to commit suicide.

NOTES

[1]Ernest C. Mossner, "Hume and the Scottish Shakespeare," *HLQ* 3 (1941), 423.

[2]George W. Stone, Jr. ed., *British Dramatists from Dryden to Sheridan* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1969), p. 473.

[3]Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton, 1949), p. 30.

[4]M. M. Kelsall, "The Meaning of Addison's *Cato*," *RES* 17 (1966), 150.

[5]Bonamy Dobree, *Restoration Tragedy (1660-1720)* (Oxford, 1929), p. 175.

[6]Robert Halsband, "Addison's *Cato* and Lady Worley Montagu," *PMLA* 65 (1950), 1122.

[7]Calhoun Winton, "The Tragic Muse in Enlightened England," *Greene Essay Studies: Presented to David Greene in the Centennial Year of USC*, ed. Paul J. Korshin and Robert R. Allen (Charlottesville, 1984), p. 140.